

# **Equipping Our Strategic Corporal for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Warfare**

by

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**Title:** Equipping Our Strategic Corporal for 21st Century Warfare

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**Thesis:** *The notional “Strategic Corporal” as described by Gen. Krulak, is poorly recruited, insufficiently trained and educated, and marginally prepared to succeed under the present Marine Corps system. If the modern battlefield will introduce a complex series of challenges to the small unit infantry leader, why does*

**Discussion:** The Marine Corps continues to utilize outdated notions on recruitment, compensation, retention, training and education to meet the needs of future operations. Core Competencies to meet the needs of our combat leaders need to be identified and comprehensively integrated into our training programs. The current Individual Training Standards for Infantrymen are inadequate; small unit leaders trained according to doctrinal standards are dangerously under-trained. Squads and platoons must be allocated the time to develop viable combat teamwork to succeed. The decentralization in the Three Block War requires the NCO to coordinate supporting arms, request medical assistance, and provide for his own sustainment. Decision-making is the most critical skill that needs to be addressed. Every opportunity should be provided for the small unit leader to employ judgment and have his decision evaluated. Only those individuals that show an aptitude for independent action and judgment should be promoted.

Recruiting ought to reinforce the notion that the infantry squad leader faces more challenges and requires a higher quality applicant than historically has been recognized. The emphasis should start with raising the minimum QT to a level commensurate with complex decision-making. Individuals should be psychologically screened for aptitude in crisis management, leadership under duress, creative problem solving, and interpersonal skills. Relying on volunteers for the Infantry MOS will not fulfill its needs. The Corps should actively screen before, during, and after recruit training. Hand in hand with the strategy of recruiting higher quality applicants is building an environment under which these applicants may flourish. By reinforcing at every opportunity the importance of personal development and individual leadership, the Strategic Corporal will grow.

Training and educating also need to be revamped. Higher training standards and more intensive unit training will support our Strategic Corporal. The curricula of the Combat Squad Leader's Course ought to serve as the baseline. Too little time and effort is devoted toward educating our Marines after graduating formal schools. Off-duty education ought to be insisted upon for promotion to higher rank. commanders should make available every opportunity for his subordinate leaders to improve themselves with the reciprocal expectation that the Corps will receive a better product. Higher pay and re-enlistment bonuses can aid in retaining the best and brightest. The Corps can no longer afford to lose the cream of its small unit leadership every four years.

**Conclusion:** The focus of our junior leader development program ought to focus on their personal development and education. By creating a system that promotes initiative, boldness, and tactical flexibility the conditions for dominance on a widely dispersed battlefield will be set. The Marine Corps should focus on the development of its leaders and the decentralization of control to affect tempo rather than winning through clever technology or overwhelming presence. The method is simple. Recruit and pay a higher quality candidate. Create an environment under which latent leadership talent will flourish (supported by the pillars mental, moral, physical, and creative development). Raise the training standards and expectations placed on small-unit leaders. Educate and cultivate the individual to the fullest extent of his potential. Create the conditions for long term professionals. This is a system that will be worthy of producing the Strategic Corporal.

“What was needed was for us to act so that...even one soldier became a fortress against the enemy. All would be well if every soldier fighting in a basement or under the stairs, knowing the general task facing the army, stood his ground alone and accomplished the task on his own. In street fighting a soldier is on occasion his own general. He needed to be given correct guidance and, so to speak, the trust of the general.”<sup>1</sup>

In 1997 the Commandant of the Marine Corps, General Charles W. Krulak, endorsed a new vision for future military operations in which the preponderance of conflicts would occur within the world’s cities. The concentration of population into urban terrain may complicate military operations like never before as the admixture of the human element and the environment become inextricable. City fighting historically requires decentralization of command and control as units become compartmentalized within “urban canyons”. High-rise buildings, rubbed streets, and subterranean passages will frustrate communications and visual control. Adding to this difficulty will come the inevitable closer contact with the larger population, as a narrower separation exists between combatants and non-combatants. In short, more will be expected of our troop leaders.

The initial description of what General Krulak called a “Three Block War” envisioned Marines performing a variety of tasks ranging from humanitarian assistance to peacekeeping to armed conflict with hostile forces.<sup>2</sup> Operations in Somalia, Haiti, the former Yugoslav Republic, and currently in Afghanistan, all reflect the complexities involved in modern contingency operations. Each requires a flexibility of mind, spirit, and body to a degree not experienced before. General Krulak went on to describe the overburdened small unit leader as a “Strategic Corporal”.<sup>3</sup> The actions of individuals and certainly their leaders will have an impact beyond their scope, several magnitudes beyond what has been traditionally expected from the junior

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<sup>1</sup> Chuikov, Vasili I., The Battle for Stalingrad, Holt, Rinehart and Winston, NY, 1964, 108.

<sup>2</sup> “Future Military Operations on Urbanized Terrain” *Marine Corps Gazette*, 81, no.10 October 1997.

<sup>3</sup> “The Strategic Corporal: Leadership in the Three Block War” *Marine Corps Gazette*, 83, no. 1, January, 1999

members. The future will demand of our small unit leaders increased individual decision-making; a greater range of tactics, techniques and procedures; situational awareness with regard to culture, ethnicity and the environment; and solid ethical underpinnings, all the while under greater scrutiny from the media and opposition groups. These leaders will have influence far beyond their historical position; as described by General Krulak “[the Strategic Corporal’s] actions, therefore, will directly affect the outcome of the larger operation”<sup>4</sup>

The problem with this construct is not that it is flawed theory, but rather an unrecognized and unsupported reality. The application has been reserved for the obvious challenge of urban warfare. Unfortunately, the increased demands on our junior NCOs cross the spectrum of conflict. If the modern battlefield introduces complex challenges to the small-unit infantry leader, why does the Marine Corps continue to rely on outdated notions in recruitment, compensation, retention, training and education of these leaders who will conduct these operations? The reality is *that our present system poorly recruits, insufficiently trains and educates, and marginally prepares our most critical leaders to succeed in future conflicts.* This is by no means an indictment of the methods used and validated by precedent. The future is a departure from the past and requires us to rethink how we prepare.

The Marine Corps has historically done an outstanding job in growing junior leaders who have succeeded in combat. The much-heralded feats of individual small-unit leaders served as the grist of our most solemn occasions. Unfortunately, the circumstances under which these capable leaders emerged did not match pace with the current reality. Prior to World War II, small unit leaders cut their teeth in the “small wars”. Performing missions remarkably similar to today, the small unit was widely dispersed and relied on the instincts of sergeants and corporals

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid. 21

to achieve success. The NCOs, considerably older than our current generation, were seasoned career professionals with years of service and experience. These men reflected the “maturity, judgment, and strength of character”<sup>5</sup> described in General Krulak’s model. Instead, today’s Marine Corps relies on the mobilization model of World War II where the increased need for troops and leaders came at the cost of age and experience. The conditions of WWII demanded a large influx of potential leaders to cope with the high casualty rates of island fighting. The highest casualty rates were among NCOs and junior officers. Proven leaders naturally rose up to positions of increased responsibility but only as a result of the large pool available and the length of most campaigns. The Marine Corps then, and now, expected a high turnover of junior leaders either as the result of casualties or peacetime attrition.

Conflicts today will not resemble those of 1944. The natural selection that occurs within a protracted conflict, a selection that draws upon a mobilization-level population base, is not suitable for contingency operations. Battalions will potentially arrive at a conflict with units that have had no substantial training and validation of its leaders. Many Marines will come fresh out of the Schools of Infantry and stand one man deep for the next position of leadership. Is this the system on which we should rely for operations with such strategic impact? The answer is a resounding *NO*. Thus, we owe it to our Marines to produce the best, most experienced small-unit leaders that can be supported under the present conditions.

### **Core Competencies for the Strategic Corporal: What is expected**

The first telling evidence of a break between our institutional expectation and reality can be found in the Individual Training Standards for infantrymen.<sup>6</sup> These standards reflect the traditional tasks associated with infantry missions, but sadly lack any recognition of current

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Marine Corps Order 1510.35D, Individual Training Standards Order for OccFld 03, Infantry (Enlisted)

conditions. Skill sets for corporals and sergeants cover only the most rudimentary tasks. If a fireteam leader were to be trained according to doctrinal standards, he and his Marines would be sorely under-trained and faced with dire consequences. This is why infantry battalions rely so little on doctrinally approved sources; these sources do not adequately provide for the real world. What then are the required skills that our corporals and sergeants need in order to survive the Three Block War?

Hard core infantry skills cannot be overemphasized. Our current training conditions do little to provide more than cursory familiarity with core skills. The heavy training and operational tempos leave little time for battalions to train to a realistic standard. Blocks for individual and collective training are routinely sacrificed for non-combat related tasks. Battalion Landing Teams (BLT) suffer even worse once lock-on with the MEU monopolizes nearly all discretionary time. Emphasis on staff planning, company SOPs, and raid-force mobility (boats, helos, tracks) comes at the expense of comprehensive small unit training. Squads and platoons must be allocated the time to develop viable combat teamwork to succeed. Survival will depend on their ability to react immediately under the most severe conditions. Prior to World War II the finest NCOs in the world exhaustively practiced battladrills in peacetime so while under fire their reactions became second nature. Weapons handling and combat marksmanship must be stressed as well. Rapid, accurate target engagement ensures the outcome not only with adversaries, but also limits collateral damage. The only proven method to ensure safety and accuracy is through repetition under varying conditions.

In addition to the core skills mentioned above, the primary added responsibility will be in communicating and employing combined arms. Squad leaders will be required to master communications to an extent previously reserved for platoon commanders or higher. The

decentralization in the Three Block War requires the NCO to coordinate supporting arms, request medical assistance, and provide for his own sustainment. The newest family of radios (SINCGARS, ISR) is more complicated than previous generations and will require more than passing familiarity.<sup>7</sup> Combined arms training must include more than just simple requests for indirect fire. Issues of weaponeering; supporting arms solutions to tactical problems; and the increased requirement of situational awareness beyond the unit will all devolve upon these junior leaders.

Decision making is the most critical skill that needs to be addressed. The entire focus of Maneuver Warfare rests on the tenet of decentralized decision making. If our small unit leaders are not trained to think for themselves then dispersion is not possible. Training should involve more than just the mastery of techniques and procedures. Every opportunity should be provided for the small unit leader to employ judgment and have his decision evaluated. Tactical decision gaming ought to be as common as physical conditioning. Only those individuals that show an aptitude for independent action and judgment should be promoted.

Cultural awareness training should be incorporated. Cultural tuning will manifest its benefits in several areas: cementing bonds within the primary group; raising the professional reputation within the larger population (non-deployed); working within the construct of increased coalition and combined operations; paying heed/respect to host country differences; and gaining insight to the enemy. There is no reason why academic preparation in social studies, international relations, and language training should not be practiced in a Marine's off time or during on-duty hours.

Ethical action should also become a "core competency" for this Strategic Corporal. The close interaction with non-combatants will place Marines in such a wide variety of challenging

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<sup>7</sup> Single Channel Ground and Airborne Radio System; Intra-Squad Radio

situations that rules of engagement and standing orders may not keep pace. The battldrills and company SOPs won't cover how to react in the midst of chaos. And in the final analysis, these Marines will have to rely upon their ethical and moral underpinnings to provide the right measure in their response. This area of development is often neglected due to the ambiguous nature and individual interpretation of such subjects. It is this very neglect that will ensure the strategic consequences of our corporal's actions; even minor lapses of ethical judgment can impact beyond the scope of the situation. If our small units are expected to make life or death decisions concerning combatants and non-combatants, then this requirement cannot be overlooked. Given these more demanding requirements it is certain that the Corps must rely on the best possible candidate to shoulder this burden. A quick examination of the source from which the future leaders are drawn is necessary.

### **Recruiting our future Strategic Corporal**

The Marine Corps recruits approximately 35-40,000 new applicants each year under the expectation of high first-term attrition, to include End of Active Service (EAS) separation. Within this base, nearly 7,000 new infantrymen are trained at the two Schools of Infantry prior to assignment. While the logic of institutionally programmed high attrition is an altogether different and equally defective symptom, the selection process itself is dangerously flawed. Applicants are initially screened during the recruiting phase using the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB) to determine applicant intellect and military program eligibility. The ASVAB comprises testing ten intellect performance areas that are computed as the Armed Forces Qualification Test (AFQT or "QT") score. The Marine Corps requires 63% of its recruits to score in the upper half (known as CAT I-III/As); 36% to score in the 31-49 percentile (CAT III/Bs); and only 1% to qualify in the 10-30 percentile (CAT IV). Experience

during Vietnam showed that acceptance of CAT IV's produced dangerously incompetent soldiers. Yet, unlike the technical MOS's, the infantry does not levy a strict intellect requirement for inclusion in its ranks beyond the minimum requirement. The actual infantry population consists of approximately 50 percent in the lower half.<sup>8</sup> Many high-caliber applicants are skeptical about enlisting as infantrymen due to the cultural perception that only the minimally qualified opt for such assignment. Often by the time these perceptions are overcome, the recruit has already entered bootcamp. The infantry MOS is a considered a Quality Enlistment Program (QEP) and cannot be entered from an open contract. Thus, if the non-infantry honorman from a graduating class realized he erred in MOS selection (probably made as an un-informed civilian) he is virtually excluded from leadership in combat arms.

Once the prospective infantryman has graduated bootcamp he is further screened at the School of Infantry. The high quality candidates are siphoned off in the following order: Marine Security Guards, Security Forces, Marine Barracks, then to the operating forces. The individual MOSs within the infantry occupational field also establishes a hierarchy; crew-served weapons MOSs take precedent over the rifleman in terms of test qualifications. This appears to make sense considering the technical nature of operating crew-served weapons. However, it is the 0311 rifleman who will most likely assume the position of fireteam or squad leader, *[read Strategic Corporal]*. Although most infantry squad leaders are quality individuals, their quality was not ensured by means of systematic selection.

Other challenges within the recruiting system concern a population of the disqualified. Recruiters are hamstrung by restrictive medical and legal regulations that bar potential leaders. The notion of the high school football captain ripe for an infantry leadership position no longer

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<sup>8</sup> Infantry minimum qualification of 80 is in general subjects, known as GT, not to be confused with QT. Scores below 80 are generally indicative of low mental acuity.

applies. He may suffer from orthopedic injury and childhood asthma, either of which disqualify him from enlistment, but should not stop him from becoming a professional athlete. The same goes for otherwise qualified applicants who have minor brushes with the law. While the Marine Corps no longer desires to serve as an outlet for the legal system, the overly litigious nature of society immediately creates criminal records for individuals charged with fighting in school or other similar acts. High school graduates that accept alternate forms of diplomas are likewise disqualified. Only in recent years have home schoolers and GEDs been considered as first tier applicants. In short, any non-conformity has been institutionally frowned upon.

Recruiting ought to reinforce the notion that the infantry squad leader faces more challenges and requires a higher quality applicant than historically has been recognized. The emphasis should start with raising the minimum QT to a level commensurate with complex decision-making. Individuals should be psychologically screened for aptitude in crisis management, leadership under duress, creative problem solving, and interpersonal skills. Although it seems unlikely, recruiters usually have no problem finding intelligent young men with a taste for adventure; the demand to fill technical MOSs often absorb these same applicants. Relying on volunteers for the Infantry MOS will not fulfill its needs. The Corps should actively screen before, during, and after recruit training.

### **A Corps of Leaders**

Has the Marine Corps supported its own Warfighting Philosophy by describing a leadership philosophy consistent with this view of the battlefield? After publishing a series of works describing the function of Marines throughout the spectrum of future conflict there is a glaring omission of any description of a leadership environment within which these men will grow. Developing leaders cannot be left up to formal schools education and indiscriminant

assignment to billets. The everyday existence of our Marines should be pursuant to creating a “Leader Army”.<sup>9</sup> If the enablers for Maneuver Warfare are decentralized decision making; mission-type orders; excellence in tactics, techniques, and procedures (TTP’s); and adaptability, then the burden falls on the Marine Corps to develop the small-unit leaders upon which these principles lie. During the interwar period of 1919-29, the German Reichswehr did exactly that. NCOs were given particularly strong individual development as it was presupposed that they would be carrying out the fight.<sup>10</sup> The same leaders could be relied upon for positions of increased responsibility, whether by billet or through commissioning, and performed well during WWII.

The Marine Corps, besides recruiting higher quality applicants and training them to a more stringent standard, needs to create an institutional environment that promotes combat leadership development. Structure for this institutional environment is proposed in the following set of principles: ***involvement, empowerment, responsibility, situational awareness, and communications.*** **Involvement** incorporates junior leaders in the decision-making process. Ground-level knowledge of any scheme of maneuver has a twofold benefit: 1) The subordinate implicitly understands the plan and is able to adapt to changes. 2) The small unit leader develops a vested interest in the success of the plan due to personal involvement. **Empowerment** authorizes the small-unit leader to take action as the situation demands. Senior commanders must allow the initiative and judgment of their fledging leaders to be exercised at every opportunity. This will train them to take action in a crisis. **Responsibility** is the reciprocal action of the small-unit leader. The basic premise in mission-type orders is the informal contract

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<sup>9</sup> Corum, James, The Roots of Blitzkrieg: Hans von Seeckt and the German Military Reform,

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

between empowerment and responsibility. The senior allows maximum use of discretion while the junior accepts the burden of taking action.

As the small-unit leader flourishes in this environment his scope of understanding and situational awareness must expand beyond his personal level to that of integrating himself within the larger framework. *Situational awareness* as a leadership principle provides the outward focus found in our doctrine.<sup>11</sup> The small-unit leader must envision his unit within several spheres. First, he must be attuned to the environmental factors that include enemy and friendly considerations. Blind perception of actions only in the context of immediate surroundings causes fratricide or collateral damage, both working contrary to our purpose. Likewise, heightened awareness allows a changed situation or irrelevant tasking to become the basis for action. The commander's intent depends on this situational awareness as a boon toward higher tempo. Finally, the principle of *communications* provides the acid test for operating under mission-type orders. Communication in the proper leadership environment stresses the importance of commander's intent, senior/subordinate relations, and implicit understanding. These elements are only possible through constant, repetitive and trusting interaction. Communicating in the form of written orders and through electronic means provides no feed back to gauge subordinate understanding. The secondary benefit will be small-unit leaders who develop the same skills within their squads.

In essence, this philosophy requires a major revision in how we create our command environment and how we prioritize goals. The role of the leader is not to dictate tasks and measure how well his subordinates respond, but rather to stimulate those small-unit leaders to assume ever increasing levels of responsibility. Subordinates are expected to recognize problems and fix them without waiting for tasks. This is corrective maintenance-level initiative.

The ultimate goal is to have small-unit leaders confident enough in their own skills and possessing their commanders' trust to trouble shoot potential friction points as a sort of preventative maintenance. This would reflect the ultimate application of initiative and judgment.

### **Training and Educating the Strategic Corporal**

As previously mentioned, training standards must rise across the board starting with recruit training. The 13 week schedule in our current bootcamp ought to serve as a second level of screening, after the recruits' AFQT. Rather than allowing recruits to opt for the Infantry QEP prior to shipping, potential infantry candidates should be qualified through a competitive process that takes place in bootcamp. Once these candidates have been identified in basic training, they would arrive at the School of Infantry better informed, more qualified, and pre-screened as potential infantry leaders. SOI needs to change its priority by reserving the high quality privates for leadership positions in the 0311, 0331, 0341, 0351 MOSs. While quality Marines are required for MSG and security forces, they need not come solely from this occupational field.

Leadership training for this higher quality infantryman should commence after the initial common training period once these candidates report to SOI. Currently, the 0311 (future team/squad leaders) receives between 30 and 34 days of training in basic skills; crew served weapons MOSs are separated somewhere in the third week. This is not the fault of the school. The length of the course needs to be increased with the express purpose of screening the infantry population for those individuals that show an aptitude for leadership. Currently neither School of Infantry provides any sort of Tactical Decision Making instruction or application. There is also no psychological evaluation at any stage of the process. Thus the burden falls upon the receiving unit to qualify its future leaders.

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<sup>11</sup> MCDP1 Warfighting,

Leadership training outside of the school should not be reserved for the appointed leaders. This is especially true today where the pool leadership within a battalion may not even be identified until deployed. The leadership environment previously described ought to include all the Marines within a unit. Casualties will shuffle men through billets faster than the system had planned. Three types of leaders will emerge: the appointed leader who holds his billet based on rank and seniority; the “de facto” leader that draws men to follow him through trust and personal qualities; and the potential leader who will be thrust into the position under the worst conditions. Therefore, it is incumbent on the operating forces to devise and sustain a program at all levels with an eye toward identifying and training future leaders. This comes part and parcel with my notion of a Corps of Leaders. Such a corps is capable of operating in the decentralized fashion that our doctrine calls for. Such a corps is capable of making decisions and value-based judgments with the full trust and confidence of its higher leadership.

The next opportunity for formal training is provided at the Combat Squad Leader’s Course. Normally reserved for sergeants (corporals can attend if holding the billet of squad leader), this course of instruction is extremely beneficial in the development of junior leaders. Students are given instruction in a variety of useful subjects with an emphasis on decision-making and individual development. Several days are dedicated to Military Operations in Urban Terrain (MOUT) and Military Operations Other Than War (MOOTW). Unfortunately, this outstanding education comes late in the junior leader’s development, often times at the end of the Marine’s leadership tour within a battalion. The curriculum ought to serve as the basis for training the Basic Rifleman. Once again, leadership training ought to pervade a Marine’s entire tour of enlistment, as a battalion’s need for a broad base of leaders dictates no other approach.

Ethical decision-making should also be included within all programs of instruction. The future situations will present such complex challenges that stretch beyond simple military expedients that a solid grounding in ethics is required. Adding ethics to a school curriculum is not to be confused with preaching virtue. Ethics should be presented as doing the right thing in a crisis situation, not practicing for altar boy status. Ethics Decision Games (EDG) have been used in our professional journals, but unfortunately they normally address non-combat related issues. This does little to help educate our Strategic Corporal.

Education is the final piece to the puzzle. Too little time is invested in enlisted Marines' education and personal development. Ninety five percent of all enlistees possess a high school diploma; only a fraction of that percentage pursues a higher degree. Degree completion programs, after-hour education, and even tuition assistance programs are underused. Infantry commands generally do not encourage enrollment; time in the classroom comes at the expense of availability for training. But the investment can pay for itself. Marines who have been exposed to a wider spectrum of knowledge and opinion will normally be more mature decision makers. This ties right back into the previous discussions on what we expect from our Strategic Corporal. Marines should be encouraged to study foreign languages, social studies, international relations, etc. They should be encouraged to develop writing and speaking skills commensurate with other 20-year-old professionals. All of this relates to how we compensate, support, and retain our leaders beyond the expectation of the system.

### **Retaining the Strategic Corporal**

The last revision in equipping our Strategic Corporal for success addresses the human element. The proven method of attracting quality candidates for service is to improve compensation. While pay and benefits are not the deciding factor in recruiting (this may only be

true given the relatively low expectation from MCRC) they certainly become more important in retaining quality Marines. Basic pay for junior members is pitifully inadequate. A private earns approximately \$1000 a month as starting pay. However, a sergeant with six years of service is only earning \$1900 a month. The requirements of his job certainly merit higher compensation. Pay rates ought to come closer to those of civilian police officers. This group of professionals often possesses the same education level and is expected to pay the same ultimate price in the course of duty. Most police officers earn double what the infantry sergeant earns, this is before the added incentive of over-time. While this discussion appears a bit mercenary the pressures of modern military life compound the issue. More than half of our NCOs have families. The pressure placed on quality personnel not being compensated according to their potential contributes to challenges for reenlistment. This strikes at the heart of growing a true professional force. A study by the Congressional Budget Office confirms that the pay of enlisted service members is artificially low as it proves cheaper to offer only selective bonuses:

Special and incentive pays provide large differentials for some occupations, but they contribute less than 5 percent to the military's total pay costs. The largest supplements go to officers in the health professions and to pilots and nuclear-trained personnel who agree to lengthy service obligations beyond their initial term. For the enlisted ranks, the services use selective reenlistment bonuses primarily at the first and second reenlistment points (generally at about four and eight years of service), regularly adjusting the bonuses as particular occupational specialties experience personnel shortages. In addition, enlistment bonuses and enhancements to the basic GI Bill benefit help channel enlisted recruits into specialties that are hard to fill. The timing and probability of promotions also create some occupational differences--enlisted personnel in the Air Force, for example, are generally promoted later than their counterparts in the other services because a larger fraction of them choose to stay beyond their initial service commitment.<sup>12</sup>

Reenlistment and retention should be given the same priority as recruiting. Why lose the flower of the Corps after only four years? Just when the Marine is truly coming into his own as a

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<sup>12</sup> Fernandez, Richard L. "What does the Military 'Pay Gap' Mean?", Congressional Budget Office, June 1999

“Strategic” asset, we let him slip away as a civilian. The same goes for Marines who make lateral moves or those who serve on B-billet assignments. Just when the investment should be paying off the Corps loses these important assets to perform other duties. The fix can be made in two ways. First, enlistments should increase from the standard hitch of four years to six or even eight. Second, junior leaders should be retained within their battalions or regiments during the course of this initial six years with substantial time off between deployments. This downtime could be used for schooling and other individual development. Cohesion is one of the keys for small-units to perform at a higher level. Adopting a system where selected leaders establish long term relations with their battalions will obviate fluctuating leader readiness within deployable units.

**Conclusion:** The reality of the future demands a new methodology in preparing our most junior leaders to realize a role as a Strategic Corporal. Technological fixes (GPS, ISR, COP, etc.) are only tools to be expertly used by capable men. The focus of our junior leader development program ought to reflect their personal development and education. By creating a system that promotes initiative, boldness, and tactical flexibility the conditions for dominance on a widely dispersed battlefield will be set. The Marine Corps should focus on the development of its leaders and the decentralization of control to affect tempo rather than winning through clever technology or overwhelming presence. The method is simple. Recruit and pay a higher quality candidate. Create an environment under which latent leadership talent will flourish (supported by the pillars mental, moral, physical, and creative development). Raise the training standards and expectations placed on small-unit leaders. Educate and cultivate the individual to the fullest extent of his potential. Create the conditions for long term professionals. This is a system that will be worthy of producing the Strategic Corporal.